

Abstract

A system for arranging foodstuff in compact formations is presented. The system contemplates a lateral conveyance apparatus having a transport surface, such as a moving conveyor belt, that is adapted to receive foodstuff from an upstream food presenting machine and selectively shifts foodstuff laterally so that adjacent rows may be arranged in a compact, nested arrangement. The lateral conveyance apparatus has a lateral shift mechanism and an optional sensing device for activating the mechanism as a row of items of foodstuff is sensed. The system may also include an axial spacing apparatus having a transport surface for varying the axial spacing of rows of foodstuff. Axial spacing is achieved by creating a speed differential between the transport surface of the axial spacing apparatus and the transport surface of another, adjacent apparatus.